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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 003793

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2011
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [KCRM](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: CHARGE MEETS WITH "MELO" COMMISSION ON
EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

REF: A. MANILA 3404

[1](#)B. MANILA 3779

Classified By: (U) Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Paul W. Jones
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Retired Supreme Court Justice Jose A. Melo and other members of the "Melo" Commission told Charge d'Affaires September 7 that their primary goals are to press for progress on cases of extrajudicial killings (EJKs) and to identify overall patterns to these killings. The Commission has a self imposed deadline of December 2006 to conclude its work, which will include public hearings, and produce a report to be submitted to President Arroyo that will include policy and legislative recommendations. Charge underscored to the Commission the importance of their work in stemming EJKs and conveyed the strong USG concern over these killings. In a side conversation, Justice Melo discreetly requested Embassy assistance on chain of command issues and patterns of government security force involvement in EJKs from other countries. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Members of the Melo Commission, composed of Chairman Jose A. Melo, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuno, National Bureau of Investigations Director Nestor Mantarang, University of the Philippines Board of Regents member Nelia Gonzalez, Butuan Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos (not present for this meeting) and General Counsel Rogelio Vinluan, emphasized that this group will press for quicker progress on high profile cases, seek out patterns, and reassure the public through open hearings. The Commission will complement the work of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Task Force Usig (ref a) by overseeing and prioritizing current cases of EJKs.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Commission members acknowledged that the willingness of witnesses to testify is the main barrier to solving many of these killings but they are prepared to offer witness protection in return for testimony. They invited the USG to submit, in confidence if necessary, any information that may shed light on who is perpetrating EJKs.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Commission General Counsel Rogelio "Rolly" Vinluan pointed out that the composition of the Commission should assuage concerns about the "independence" of this group, noting that each of the members comes from a different "walk of life:" judiciary, law enforcement, legal, the church, and academia.

[1](#)5. (C) In a side conversation with the Charge after the meeting, Justice Melo requested any assistance the USG can provide to help the Commission navigate issues of command responsibility, as well as to understand patterns of government security force involvement in EJKs around the world. Embassy is following up with appropriate agencies on

possible assistance. Melo re-affirmed his public statements that there are "no sacred cows" when it comes to establishing culpability in cases of EJKs and that the Commission is intent on calling military and police officials to testify on their alleged involvement in these crimes.

¶6. (C) Comment. Melo Commissioners were clearly in the middle of reviewing cases when Charge and PolOff arrived. We are encouraged by their seriousness, and the strong reputation of Justice Melo.

Jones